

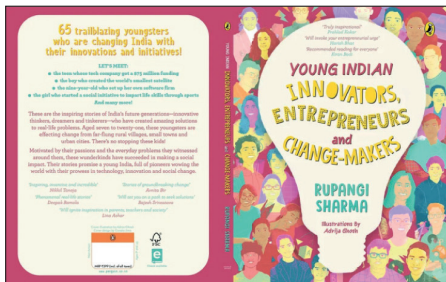
Entrepreneurship Education for Social Impact

BIMTECH Business Perspectives
4(1) 70–75, 2023
© 2023 Birla Institute of Management
Technology
DOI: 10.1177/25819542231185397
bsp.bimtech.ac.in



Saloni Sinha¹

About the Book¹: *Young Indian Innovators, Entrepreneurs and Change-makers*



Author: Rupangi Sharma
Language: English
Publisher: Puffin
(Children imprints of Penguin Books)
Published on: 29 April 2022
Kindle edition: ₹261.25
Paperback edition: ₹277.00
Total pages: 160
ISBN: 13978-0143451778
Available on Amazon <https://www.amazon.in/dp/0143451774>

Let us meet the adolescent whose tech startup received a US \$75 million investment, the boy who built the tiniest satellite ever, the nine-year-old who founded her own software company, and the woman who launched a social movement to teach life lessons via sports. These are the uplifting tales of India's upcoming generations mentioned in the book—creative thinkers, visionaries, and tinkers—who have developed incredible remedies for real issues. These young people, who range in age from seven to 21, are bringing about change in remote

¹Department of Communication, Theatre and Future Skills, Birla Institute of Management Technology (BIMTECH), Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India

Corresponding author:

Saloni Sinha, Department of Communication, Theatre and Future Skills, Birla Institute of Management Technology (BIMTECH), Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh 201306, India.
E-mail: saloni.sinha@bimtech.ac.in



Creative Commons Non Commercial CC BY-NC: This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 License (<http://www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>) which permits non-Commercial use, reproduction and distribution of the work without further permission provided the original work is attributed.

rural villages, small towns, and urban centers. These kids are unstoppable! These young wonders were inspired by their passions and the common issues they saw around them, and they were successful in having an impact on society (Source: Amazon).

Interview of Ms. Rupangi Sharma, Author and Edupreneur

Professor Sinha: Dear Rupangi, the editorial team of *BIMTECH Business Perspectives* is very grateful to you for this interview. We would be happy to know about your journey of becoming an edupreneur.

Ms. Rupangi: I think for me, the journey of becoming an edupreneur started with this deep wish to change the face of education and contribute in whatever possible way so that learning becomes more exciting and fun for students. There was definitely a gap that needed to be bridged in the current education system. A big change in the teaching-learning ecosystem was deemed necessary from “the Sage on the stage” model, which was one-way, teacher-centric, and dull. I felt excited by the prospect of being able to be a part of that change. That is how the edupreneur in me was born. It was interesting for me because I do not think I began with the idea of becoming an entrepreneur. While I was exploring different ideas and perspectives, it brought out my curiosity as well. I wanted to explore this one big question. How do we make learning more exciting, more fun for students, and more engaging so that the classroom comes alive, whether that is for a six-year-old, or three-year-old, or even a 60-year-old learner?

Professor Sinha: Having been exposed to global education, what, according to you, will transform the education system of India?

Ms. Rupangi: While I was in college, I was in the habit of reading a lot, especially, during my postgraduation and social communications media class. We were reading about an American thinker who was a proponent of democratizing education. I started deep diving into this further. India, early 21st century, had started seeing social media and digital channels impact education. I started thinking about how technology can be used to democratize learning. I thought this was something that I felt excited about as an educator. This is something that I would like to contribute to, you know, changing the way we look at education. And, if there is a way for us to reimagine education and make it more exciting, as I said, then learner-centric paradigms, inclusivity, democratization, and digitalization of education are the future. The other thing that I like about learning is that it is about human development. We talk about learning in a very restrictive sense, that it is about school or college. You know, learning is a pursuit. This is going to be lifelong. So now we have started talking about lifelong learning and how we are always learning, right? Hence, educationists have to make conscious efforts through curriculum, content, and pedagogical innovations to ensure that learning becomes more fun.

Professor Sinha: Share your vision for nurturing changemakers and innovators in our society. What are certain roadblocks, according to you?

Ms. Rupangi: I think the first is that we do not talk about these kinds of avenues or opportunities with young people in the first place. So a lot of people do not understand these terms. What does it mean to be an entrepreneur? What does it mean to be an innovator or a changemaker? The more we talk about what exactly this entails and share the journeys of entrepreneurs, changemakers, and innovators, the more I think it becomes a viable opportunity that others can pursue because it requires a certain kind of skill set. As you know, you need to be high on creativity, have the ability to solve problems, and demonstrate a lot of empathy when you are trying to create a solution for a problem that exists for millions of people across the world. So nurturing and honing these skills is the first roadblock, I feel. So, we need to first give those examples of entrepreneurial journeys and what all of these things mean. Then, finally, we can understand what skills are required of those people. Then try to teach those skills as well.

The second roadblock is that, I think, India especially has been affected by a mindset where kids are encouraged to be just one of these three: doctors, engineers, and lawyers. So I think that generation still nurtures their children to feel that they have to pursue these three or four things. But there is an explosion of professions that have come up, you know, because of the digital age. You can now see content creators and many other avenues. Such is the future of work. That is not a roadblock but an opportunity!

Professor Sinha: How do you see storytelling genres being useful in the classrooms?

Ms. Rupangi: That is a very interesting question because, for me, even when I was doing my master's or doctoral study, I have always felt that storytelling is something that needs to be introduced to every field, be it learning, teaching, or leadership. You know, the more we talk about youngsters who are achieving all of these different kinds of milestones through their entrepreneurial ventures or social activism, the more we will prepare the generations for the future. The mindset change that we want will happen by bringing these stories to life again. That is another example of how, you know, storytelling can be so powerful. So, I think that storytelling is a very fundamental core skill and should be taken much more seriously. The Western world, where they focus on research, brings storytelling into case studies or research methods. Today country is dealing with a huge gap which can be bridged potentially if our educational practices are based on research. So I think that is a big challenge as well. In scientific journals, the endeavor is to have research that tells stories. Even with numbers nowadays, you can tell stories. We are like storytelling animals. The brain is conditioned to think in the form of narrative.

One of the reasons I became an educator was to understand how we can bring storytelling into education in a bigger way. That is something I am still working on. How can storytelling genres or storytelling in general, whether it is a case

study or nonfiction, be useful in classrooms? How else do you inspire and educate children? So the people who can educate or inspire the most are always the ones who tell stories. So again, I think that there is massive use in the classroom or outside of the classroom, in general, for learning and teaching. I think storytelling is massive in terms of the level of engagement that it can engender.

Professor Saloni: How do you see this book adding value to educators and researchers?

Ms. Rupangi: I think the book addresses a lot of different myths that we have about age. So age is not something you should consider when deciding whether you are too old to do something. It is not just about being young enough to do something; it is also about, you know, being too old to do something. So I think age should not be a factor. And that is something that the book also talks about. All of the featured young Indian innovators are between the ages of seven and 21. They are so inspiring that their stories definitely should be heard. And I think that is how the book adds value to educators and researchers as well, because these 65 stories have not been heard before. They need to be shared in every type of classroom to open minds toward research and discussions.

Professor Sinha: How do you see your book contributing to changing the mindset toward child innovators?

Ms. Rupangi: I remember my publisher asking me, “Are you sure that there are youngsters between seven and 21 who are innovators, teams, makers, and entrepreneurs, you know, who have successfully done all of this?” Well, India has such talents, and we just need to nurture them and talk about their journey. Learn resilience, self-belief, and perseverance from these heroes and heroines. Look at the persistence, curiosity, and endurance of this one child who, at the age of eight or 11, fighting between those times when he was in and out of hospitals, thought that I would cure sickle cell one day. I will find a cure for it. And he did! This is a young Indian innovator, right? Look beyond their age! I think these are very honest stories about these youngsters but sadly, and typically so, in the media, I would see that their stories were just sort of portrayed as, you know, these young geniuses. And they would just highlight their age, but they would not highlight their journey because I think there is an underlying assumption that they are never going to succeed. This must change, and my book may make that happen, I feel.

Professor Sinha: What prompted you to develop this book? How and why did you choose the theme of entrepreneurship and innovation?

Ms. Rupangi: I wrote this book because, in my experience as someone who is an entrepreneur, I was taught subjects such as innovation, creative learning, and design thinking. Whenever I ask students about any innovator, the obvious answers are Steve Jobs and Einstein. But you know, you would never hear any of them say that I can be an innovator too. I would then engage with them in a dialogue and

say, “OK, do you know what the attributes of an innovator are?” And they would come up with age as one of the factors.

And so that is where I wanted to challenge their assumptions that an innovator is someone who is from the Western world with proven success. I mean, the point is that today you can be an innovator, you can make change, you can make an impact, and you do not necessarily have to believe that everything has been solved in the world because it has not. So I think that was another big reason for me to choose to change the understanding and break the biases around innovators.

Their answers were, of course, not wrong, but they are sort of simply symptomatic of the underlying issues in our education system. We do not teach our kids that they have to solve problems when they go out into the world. We teach them through textbooks that everything is already solved. And then they do go out into the world, and you suddenly realize that everything hinges on your ability to solve problems. But that is something you have not been taught, right? Generally, what we are telling children, whether it is within the walls of the school or outside of school, is that everything is already solved.

So I think that is another thing that I felt as an entrepreneur and an authorpreneur. So if there is a book that I am trying to find but cannot, the first reaction to that is to write it right. So as an educator, I was looking for books that showed young people role models of their age, especially young Indian innovators, entrepreneurs, and changemakers. And when I could not find it, I knew what I had to do.

I have always loved writing and expressing myself through words, and I think when you are writing, it is the best way to travel because you are traveling across time, across space, and across different ideas. So I think it is fascinating, just the act of writing. It is also linked to, you know, my passion to be an entrepreneur because this way you can inspire and educate. For an *Aatmanirbhar Bharat*, these stories must be told.

Professor Sinha: More and more people are reading nonfiction, which inspires them to become an author too. What is your key mantra for budding authors?

Ms. Rupangi: I think my first and last mantra is “be disciplined.” Focus on instilling the habit of writing every day. So I think that is about it. It starts and finishes at that because even doing that is hard. And then the second part is to be able to handle your inner critic and not lose faith. Keep encouraging yourself to learn more and more about how you can be a better writer.

Appendix²

Starting Early: Changing Paradigms in Entrepreneurship Education

Innovators are young people who dare to walk the road less traveled and are highly curious, creative, and critical thinkers. They use their imagination, sensitivity, and problem-solving abilities to develop original concepts or answers to contemporary issues. They are minds that want to change the world around them because they

want to take the reins and become drivers of development and change. This age-diverse community of innovators might come from any background or area of interest, but they all have the desire to make a difference and demonstrate a natural curiosity. They might have a special interest in the fields of science, technology, engineering, the arts, or mathematics (STEAM), and they might use their knowledge and abilities to create novel innovations, goods, or services. Some young inventors have received widespread acclaim for their work, such as Gitanjali Rao, who was selected as Time Magazine's first-ever "Kid of the Year" at the age of 15.

The National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog is a policy think tank of the Government of India that works towards fostering innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainable development. One of NITI Aayog's key initiatives is the Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), which aims to promote innovation and entrepreneurship across India. Under AIM, NITI Aayog has launched several programs to encourage and support child innovators. One of these programs is the Atal Tinkering Lab (ATL) initiative, which provides a platform for students to develop their innovation and creativity skills. ATLs are set up in schools across India and are equipped with state-of-the-art technologies such as 3D printers, robotics, and electronics kits.

In addition to ATLs, NITI Aayog has also launched the Atal Incubation Centres (AIC) at HEIs to foster curiosity, changemaker mindsets, and researcher mindsets. Through the Atal Innovation Challenge, a national-level innovation competition for students, NITI Aayog invites innovative ideas from students across India and provides them with mentoring, funding, and support to turn their ideas into reality. The challenge also provides a platform for students to showcase their ideas to potential investors and industry experts. NITI Aayog has also launched the Atal Community Innovation Centre (ACIC) initiative, which aims to promote innovation at the community level. ACICs provide a platform for community members to come together and collaborate on innovative projects that can benefit their community.

Overall, NITI Aayog is playing a significant role in fostering a culture of innovation and creativity among child innovators in India. Through its various initiatives, NITI Aayog is providing young students with the skills, tools, and opportunities they need to succeed in the 21st century. A project of the Indian government's AIM is the ATL. ATL wants to encourage entrepreneurship and creativity among young Indian students by providing them a platform to hone innovative mindsets and abilities, including design thinking, problem-solving, and creativity. (Source: NITI Aayog website, <https://niti.gov.in/>)

Notes

1. The book was featured in the "Entrepreneurship and Innovation Panel Talk" during BIMTECH Business Literature Festival 2023 on February 10, 2023 (<https://businessliteraturefestival.bimtech.ac.in>).
2. The appendix is compiled by Ms. Charu Goyal, PGDM 2022–24 and Executive Member-Majlis-Theatre and Debating Society, BIMTECH, Greater Noida.